

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 27

NEW YORK TIMES
4 May, 1985

The Red Banana Menace

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What has 58,000 telephones, almost as many people as Houston, Tex., and threatens the security of the United States?

As every student of the World Almanac knew immediately after reading the first two clues, the answer is Nicaragua. Those same students know that when the count was last taken the United States had only 191 million telephones to match against Nicaragua's 58,000.

The arithmetic is ominous: for every 58 telephones with which Nicaragua can hit us, the United States has only 191,000 telephones with which to retaliate.

Closet Stalinists and American-haters will say that American superiority on this scale proves President Reagan overrated Nicaraguan power when he ordered a trade embargo to shield the United States against an avalanche of Marxist-grown bananas. Don't be deceived.

If superiority of 191,000 to 58 looks impressive, consider the population figures. What soft-headed liberals overlook is that while our telephones must support a nation of 234.2 million

people, Nicaragua's have only 2.8 million people to serve.

You won't hear it from the left-leaning soreheads who can never forgive President Reagan for being unbeatable in photo opportunities, but a 191,000-to-58 superiority in telephones shrinks alarmingly when factored into the abovementioned population figures. For example:

Has it occurred to you that 234.2 million people with 191 million telephones do not have enough of these vital machines to equip every citizen with a phone? Simple arithmetic reveals why the Pentagon is deeply alarmed.

Fact: With 234.2 million people and 191 million telephones, we have a desperate shortage — one phone for each eight-tenths (0.8) of a citizen.

More Fact: With their 58,000 telephones the Nicaraguans have one phone for every 48 people.

Doesn't this put them at a disadvantage? Hah! To believe that is to fall for the drivel spread by the so-called Neo-Old New Deal Big Government.

Consider how many Nicaraguans yearn to be free of their Red masters so they can live under a new government freely chosen by the United States Central Intelligence Agency. Would you guess that 47 of every 48 Nicaraguans, given the blessed opportunity offered by a telephone, would hesitate for an instant to call the White House and say "Uncle," as President Reagan has politely asked their insolent Government to do?

That would be a highly conservative guess, unless you doubt indubitable White House sources, as do so many notorious left-wingers, who are basically the same people who prevented us from using a few more bombings to turn Vietnam into another Hawaii.

Why are these 47 of every 48 Nicaraguans not calling the White House already? It is obvious: In a country with one telephone for every 48 people, the 47 who want to get rid of the Government are going to have a hard time getting a telephone installed.

To get a telephone in these straits, it is probably necessary to cotton up to the powerful Marxists who run things and promise to collaborate in their schemes for putting Red bananas on the breakfast cereal of unsuspecting North Americans.

These hard facts demonstrate why people who really care about America are in favor of the President's huge new "Banana Wars" budget.

If we can provide two telephones for every living American — excepting only the handful of surviving big-government liberals who can't stand it that the President has a fantastic smile — Nicaragua's chances of getting its Marxist-Leninist bananas into

the innocent North American stomach via the oatmeal could be virtually eliminated.

This is the assumption behind the multibillion-dollar "Banana Wars" project. It would provide every United States citizen with the telephone wherewithal to call three other citizens immediately upon rising and caution them to make sure their bananas are not Red Nicaraguan bananas before slicing them onto the cereal.

On the Central American front, the C.I.A. would be authorized to slip thousands of heavily equipped guerrilla telephone installers (the "phontras") into the Nicaraguan countryside to install telephones in the huts of all who are willing to use them to dial Washington and call for an end to big government, except at the Pentagon.

Interested sources say Nicaraguans refusing to let the "phontras" install phones definitely will not be shot, provided they have a reasonable excuse, such as having teen-agers who would drive them crazy if there was a phone in the hut. □